

Message Text

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20

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-07 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAM-01 NIC-01 OMB-01 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 DRC-01

/135 W

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P R 060904Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 635

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

CINCUSARPAC

COMUSTDC

CINCPACFLT

CINCPACAF

DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 5037

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CH UR

SUBJ: HELICOPTER INCIDENT

REF: MOSCOW 6583

SUMMARY: SOVIET MFA STATEMENT ALSO STRUCK US AS UNUSUALLY
SHARP AND EVEN THREATENING. PRC HAS NOT YET RESPONDED
PUBLICLY BUT PROBABLY RECOGNIZES FAILURE TO GIVE SOME
SATISFACTION TO SOVIETS ON HELICOPTER INCIDENT WILL PROVOKE
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RETALIATION OF SOME SORT. PEKING MIGHT FIND WAY OUT BY

SPEEDY TRIAL AND CONVICTION FOR CREWMEN,FOLLOWED BY THEIR
EXPULSION. SOME ELEMENTS IN PEKING'S LEADERSHIP, HOWEVER,
MIGHT PREFER TO TOUGH IT OUT. END SUMMARY.

1. PEKING SO FAR HAS MADE NO PUBLIC RESPONSE TO MOSCOW'S
DEMANDS FOR RELEASE OF CAPTURED HELICOPTER AND CREW
(REFTEL). INDEED, CENTRAL MEDIA HAVE NOT MENTIONED THE
SUBJECT SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE ORIGINAL PRC PROTEST NOTE
ON MARCH 25. THE CHINESE MAY HAVE BEEN HOLDING BACK FOR A
SUDDEN PROPAGANDA BARRAGE, PROBABLY CONCURRENT WITH OR
FOLLOWING TRIAL OF CREW MEMBERS.

2. PEKING MUST HAVE EXPECTED THAT ITS HANDLING OF THE CASE
WOULD ELICIT A STRONGRIW., 3. THE CHINESE, HOWEVER, COULD
INTERPRET THE SOVIET WARNING AS AN ULTIMATUM EVEN MORE THREAT-
ENING THAN THOSE ISSUED AT THE TIME OF THE USSURI RIVER
FIGHTING IN 1969. IN THE CURRENT WARNING THE BURDEN IS ON
CHINA TO TAKE POSITIVE STEPS TO AVOID CONSEQUENCES RATHER
THAN, IN 1969 , NOT TO TAKE AGGRESSIVE ACTION.

3. THE CHINSES WE BELIEVE WILL RECOGNIZE THAT FAILURE TO GIVE
SATISFACTION WILL PROVOKE SOVIET RETALIATION OF SOME SORT,
RANGING FROM ANTI-CHINA DEMONSTRATIONS TO PUNITIVE MILITARY
ACTION--- PERHAPS ONE INTENDED TO SEIZE HOSTAGES. IF PEKING
CALCULATED THE LATTER WAS POSSIBLE, IT COULD FIND A WAY OUT
WHILE STILL MAINTAINING A POSE OF RIGHTEOUS WRATH BY AN EARLY
TRIAL AND CONVICTION OF THE CREWMEN FOLLOWED BY THEIR EXPUL-
SION AMID POLEMICAL FIREWORKS.

4. A DECISION TO TOUGH IT OUT AND TAKACWHATEVER THE SOVIETS
CARE TO GIVE, HOWEVER, MIGHT BE PREFERRED BY SOME ELEMENTS
IN THE PEKING LEADERSHIP. MILITARY CHIEFS UNDER POLITICAL
PRESSURE MIGHT WELCOME A NEW WAR SCARE AS STRENGTHENING
THEIR POSITION. OTHERS WHO ARE TRYING TO LIMIT THE
POLITICAL GOALS OF THE ANTI-LIN, ANTI-CONFUCIUS CAMPAIGN,
AND TO KEEP THE SOVIETS TARGETED AS THE OVERRIDING ENEMY
MIGHT ALSO WELCOME SOME LIMITED INTENSIFICATION OF SINO-
SOVIET TENSIONS. AT THE SAME TIME MAO IS NOT INCLINED TO
WAVER IN SUCH SITUATIONS AND THE RADICALS IN THE CURRENT
DOCTRINAIRE CLIMATE WOULD NOT WANT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN
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ADVOCATING LESS THAN A RESOLUTELY UNYIELDING RESPONSE.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, PEKING'S PRESENT LINE DOWNPLAYS THE
IMMEDIATE SOVIET THREAT AND INSISTS THAT EUROPE IS THE FIRST
TARGET OF SOVIET AGGRESSION. THIS SITUATION IS PROTRAYED
AS THE RESULT OF THE PRC'S DETENTE POLICIES AS WELL AS ITS
DEFENSE ADVANCES. NEW ALARMS ALONG THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER
MIGHT THUS CHALLENGE SOME OF THE ASSUMPTIONS OF PRESENT

FOREIGN POLICIES AND ALSO STRENGTHEN THOSE WHO SEEK LARGER
DEFENSE ALLOCATIONS. WE IMAGINE CHOU WILL BE AMONG THOSE
SEEKING TO DEFLECT THE SOVIET THREAT WHILE EXPLOITING IT
POLITICALLY.
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